

GENERAL DISTRICT COURT SERVICES

DESCRIPTION

The General District Court hears civil, criminal, and traffic matters. The Court exercises original jurisdiction over all misdemeanor cases and conducts preliminary hearings in felony cases to determine probable cause. In addition, the Court hears all traffic cases and certain violations of the County Code. The Court also has jurisdiction over most civil matters not exceeding \$25,000, and jurisdiction in personal injury and wrongful death cases not exceeding \$50,000. In FY24, the average monthly caseload for the Court is 8,300 new cases, this represents a 3.9 % increase over last year’s caseload. In addition to new cases, each month the clerk’s office processes an average of 2,000 witness subpoenas, 250 requests for certified copies of prior convictions, 130 requests for restricted licenses, 60 protective orders, 760 garnishments, and 500 requests for civil abstracts. The clerk’s office also assists citizens with phone inquiries and in-person visits, averaging 4,400 phone calls and 2,000 walk-ins monthly.

There are five judges serving in this court, each having been appointed by the General Assembly for a term of six years. The judges, clerk, and deputy clerks are all paid directly by the Commonwealth. The County provides space, furniture, supplemental salary, and support for the General District Court.

OBJECTIVES

- To process cases for the public to facilitate the swift administration of justice, while providing a fair and equitable judicial process for all.
- To provide an orderly and comprehensive system of maintaining court records as required by law, and quickly update case files, so that accurate and current electronic case information is readily available.
- To maintain an accurate accounting of court funds.
- To continually add services to better serve the public.

FISCAL YEAR 2025 SUMMARY

Annual Fiscal Plan

<u>Description</u>	<u>FY23 Actual</u>	<u>FY24 Original</u>	<u>FY25 Approved</u>	<u>Change 24 to 25</u>
Personnel	\$ 216,461	\$ 260,513	\$ 357,612	37.3%
Operation	155,592	251,488	201,488	-19.9%
Capital	0	0	0	0.0%
Total	\$ 372,053	\$ 512,001	\$ 559,100	9.2%
Personnel Complement	N/A	N/A	1 *	1

*Personnel expenses in this budget reflect one new full-time county position, as well as a salary supplement paid by the county. Additional personnel expenses are paid by the Commonwealth of Virginia.

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PERFORMANCE MEASURES

	<u>FY23</u>	<u>FY24</u>	<u>FY25</u>	<u>Change 24 to 25</u>
*Workload Measures				
Total New Cases Filed	95,684	99,418	99,418	-
Total New Criminal Cases Filed	13,027	13,139	13,139	-
Total New Involuntary Civil Cases Filed	1,231	1,242	1,242	-
Total New Civil Cases Filed	33,727	35,910	35,910	-
Total New Traffic Cases Filed	47,699	49,127	49,127	-
Number of Full-Time Judges	5	5	5	-

*Note: These estimates are prepared by State Supreme Court Personnel.

BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

The General District Court's budget for FY25 totals \$559,100, an increase of \$47,099 or 9.2%. The personnel component of the budget is projected to increase \$97,099, while the operating budget's \$50,000 decrease will offset a portion of the growth. The increase is due to the addition of an administrator for the behavioral health docket approved by the Supreme Court of Virginia. This position will be responsible for all clerical aspects of this new docket, including data entry, coordinating with various agencies, and handling all mental health paperwork in the Court's office.

In 2019, the County began providing supplemental compensation for the state deputy clerks to assist with recruitment and retention within the General District Court Clerk's Office. The total number of employees receiving the supplement is 49. The salary supplement has enabled the clerk's office to hire and retain qualified and well-trained staff. This support continues in the FY25 budget.

The operating budget is utilized to support the daily activities of the General District Court, which consists of five courtrooms and administrative offices occupied by five judges, 49.8 state employees, one full-time and three part-time County employees. The salary and benefit costs of the five judges and 49.8 employees are paid by the Commonwealth of Virginia and are not reflected in this budget apart from the supplemental compensation described above. The salaries of the one full-time and three part-time County employees are paid by the County and are reflected in the budget.

DEPARTMENTAL HIGHLIGHTS

In 2020, Henrico Mental Health received a state grant to begin a Mental Health Diversion Program (MHDP) that has been operating in the Henrico General District Court since that time. The program is designed to address cases in which an individual has a significant mental illness (SMI), and their criminal conduct is related to their SMI. Given the closure of mental health facilities which has resulted in a lack of bedspaces in hospitals for individuals with SMIs, the Henrico County jail has seen a marked increase in the number of these individuals being held, especially those that are homeless and not receiving treatment.

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When an incarcerated individual is found eligible for the MHDP program, a release plan is put in place that includes housing and a treatment plan. The cases are monitored by the MHDP team and court to confirm compliance with the program, and the individuals reappear in Court periodically until their case concludes. The program has had remarkable success, with individuals returning to the community with housing, treatment, and medication. Each of the individuals who have successfully completed the program have also found employment and most have reconnected with family that they had not been in communication with for many years.

Last year, the Court submitted an application to the Supreme Court of Virginia for the formation of a Behavioral Health Docket, which was approved in October 2023. The approval of this docket allows the Court to increase the number of individuals who will be eligible to receive services through this specialized court process. The Court is excited to offer this opportunity to individuals who may not be incarcerated after arrest but are still in need of mental health support and services. There is a dedicated team that consists of one of General District Court's judges, a prosecutor, defense counsel representative, specially trained CIT police officers, and members from both Henrico Mental Health and Community Corrections. Specialized training was completed before the submission of the application and will have the docket in place in 2024. All the team members agreed to begin this process on an in-kind basis, which will initially limit how many participants may be eligible. It is the court's hope that as the success of the docket is proven funding will be obtained to allow the Court to expand the number of participants.